

**AMENDMENTS TO THE ABSTRACT**

Please substitute the following paragraph for the abstract now appearing in the currently filed specification:

--An inverter circuit for discharge lamps for multi-lamp lighting in which the value of a negative resistance characteristic of a fluorescent lamp is controlled, and an excessively set reactance is eliminated by causing a shunt transformer to have a reactance exceeding the negative resistance characteristic, ~~whereby shunting characteristics high in performance are obtained while reducing the size of the circuit. In an inverter circuit for discharge lamps for multi-lamp lighting, two~~ Two coils connected to a secondary winding of a step-up transformer of the inverter circuit are arranged and magnetically coupled to each other to form a shunt transformer for shunting current such that magnetic fluxes generated thereby ~~are opposed to cancel~~ each other ~~to cancel-out~~. Discharge lamps are connected to the coils, respectively, with currents flowing therethrough being balanced ~~with each other. Lighting of each of the~~ Each discharge lamps ~~lamp is caused by the fact that~~ lighted because a reactance of an inductance related to the balancing operation ~~of the shunt transformer, the reactance being which is~~ in an operating frequency of the inverter circuit, exceeds a negative resistance of ~~the each of the~~ discharge lamps.--